

Cornerstone Church

January 8, 2017

Sermon Series: Practicing Our Readiness Drills for Christ's Return - Seeking God's Guidance from 1st and 2nd Peter

Today's Sermon: Keeping Our Conduct Honorable, Part One: Our Relationship to Civil Authorities

Today's Passage: 1 Peter 2:11-12

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Introduction:

Main Point: In a world where it is often easier to go-along in order to get-along, Peter reminds us that it is worth all the effort to fight that temptation because by living out our Christianity we may even influence our persecutors to speak well of God when the final judgement day arrives.

Review

[9] But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. [10] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Abstain from your Fleshly Passions

1. To the non-believing world around us, genuine Christians appear weird, out-of-place, strange, and because it is a human to desire to be accepted, it is a strong temptation to return to those behaviors that helped us "fit in" with the crowd. **Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh**
 - Soon after conversion, new converts to Christ realize that they don't feel "at home" in this world like they used to.

- Their old friends will begin to think them to be very strange for not participating in the same behavior (dirty jokes, racial bigotry, sexual immorality, cheating on employers, etc.)
- However, God has not commanded us to leave this world (and join a Christian commune) but to reside in this world as strangers (short term aliens) and exiles (long-term aliens).
- So the battle for every new Christian and every persecuted Christian is to choose to refuse to "go-along" in order to "get-along". The Apostle Paul tells us what fleshly behaviors we are to abstain from: **(Galatians 5:19-21 ESV) Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**
- Here are some fleshly temptations you might be confronted with at the office:
 - **sexual immorality**, (What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas)
 - **impurity** = profligate living, (Wonder what the Kardashians are doing. . .?)
 - **sensuality** = unbridled lust, (Don't tell my wife I went to Lookers. . .)
 - **idolatry** (Why aren't you sad the Vikings aren't in the playoffs)
 - **sorcery** = (pharmacia) (I've got it under control, please don't tell the boss about my 1) meth, 2) weed, 3) Jack Daniels addiction)
 - **enmity** (I can't stand that super, one of these days, I'm going to . . .)
 - **strife**, (I'm not going to forgive him, after what he did to me. . .)
 - **jealousy** (I hope she screws up big time, that promotion belonged to me)
 - **fits of anger** (What do you mean I can't slam the bathroom stall, better that than my fist in his face. . .)
 - **rivalries**, (don't let her sit here, she's trying to be friends with them. . .)

Or it Will Damage Your Soul

1. The cost of going-along is the damage it will do to your soul. **which wage war against your soul.**
 - Humans are tri-partite beings. We have a body, a soul, and a spirit.
 - The best explanation for our tri-partite condition is offered by Dr. Clarence Larkin in his book *Rightly Dividing the Word*¹ Here is how these 3 parts can be described:
 - Imagine ourselves as 3 concentric circles. The outer circle is our body which interacts with the material world through its five senses of Sight, Smell, Hearing, Taste and Touch.
 - The middle circle represents the soul which is the center of our imagination, our conscience, our memory, our reason and most importantly, our affections.
 - The inner circle represents our spirit, which at creation was fully alive and able to respond to God and worship God but after the fall of man (Genesis 3) that part of man remains a dead vacuum until the Spirit of God regenerates it and then it can begin to have faith, and engage in genuine prayer, and worship.
 - We can damage our souls **(1 Thessalonians 5:23 ESV) Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Peter says that when we engage in the passions of the flesh that Paul described we damage our souls by 1) crippling our imaginations to desire and want only fleshly desires, 2) dull our conscience so that we are no longer sensitive to sinful behaviors, 3) muddy our reason so that we begin to rationalize behavior that we would condemn before and 4) most importantly, increase our affections for the things of this world and decrease our affections for the things of the Lord.

And It Will Glorify God

2. By choosing to not “go-along” with the world we can affect how non-believers will eventually see their foolishness and agree that God’s ways are wise and worshiping (obeying) God was the wisest choice all

along. **(12) Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.**

In history

- Early Christians were falsely accused of being cannibals (because we spoke of eating Christ’s body and blood) and incestuous (because we spoke of one another as “brother” or “sister” even when we were not blood relatives) and horribly immoral (because they held weekly ‘love feasts’).
- These were some of the accusations Nero used to burn Christian as city street torches.
- When Jesus returns, even Nero, and all those who sided with him, will admit that God was right in how He transformed Christians into becoming baby rescuers, disease treaters, monogamous wife lovers.

Currently

- Christians are ridiculed for being homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic, religious bigots, or worse, homosexual haters/abusers, haters of other nationalities, haters of Muslims, and intolerant of atheists and agnostics.
- The above accusations may be true for some professing Christians, but is never true of a genuine believer (once God has truly gotten a hold of their heart and changed their mind).
- When Christ comes back again all of these accusers will have to confess that God was wise to make His children lovers of the hurting, ministers to the homosexual who is in bondage, passionate towards Muslims and anxious for them to accept Christ, and . . . God will get the glory.

¹ Clarence Larkin, *Rightly Dividing The Word*, page 86)